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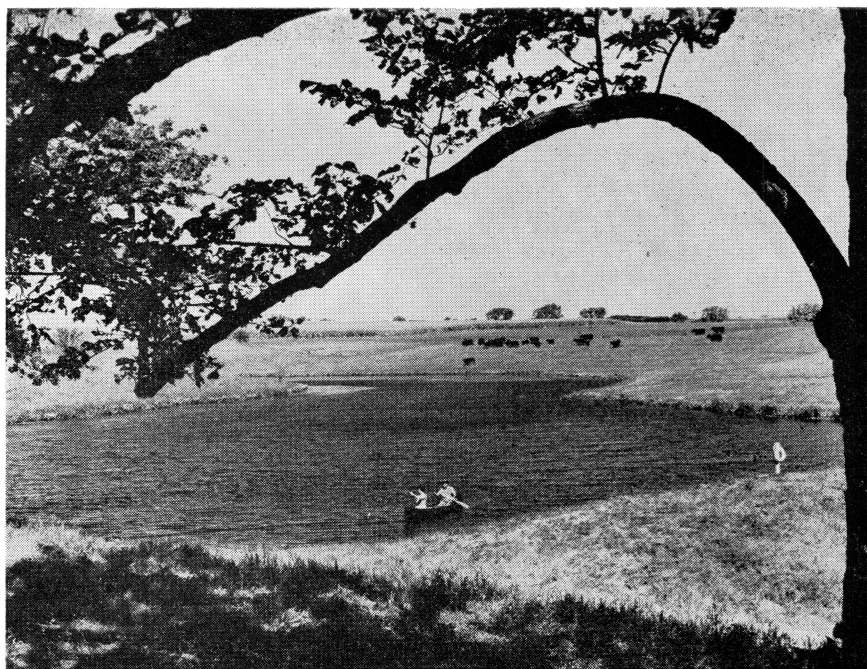


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MAKE YOUR FARM POND SAFE

Safety precautions at your farm pond can add to your family enjoyment and your own peace of mind. Some safety features are best provided as you plan your pond. But other safety features can be added later.

by Norval J. Wardle

OWNERS OF the more than 25,000 farm ponds in Iowa quickly point out the economic benefits, esthetic beauty and many recreational uses of the ponds. But, as owners of 39 of these ponds point out, farm ponds can be extremely dangerous.

On many farms, ponds are an essential source of water for livestock, irrigation and sometimes for household uses or fire protection.

Ponds are also used for fishing, boating, swimming, ice skating and other forms of recreation. On some farms recreation has been developed into a profitable enterprise to supplement the farm business.

However, these advantages seem small when inadequate safety measures result in a drowning in a pond. Drownings in farm ponds are occurring at an increasing rate each year. During the last 10 years 39 Iowans have drowned in farm ponds, but six of the drownings occurred last year.

Farm ponds can add wealth, beauty and recreational activities to a farm *and can be safe at the same time*. But a safe pond doesn't just happen. Safety needs must be considered as the pond is built just as construction needs for sealing the pond, laying out the irrigation system or stocking the pond with fish are considered.

How can you make your pond

safe and prevent drownings? In general, there are three areas of control — general supervision, control of recreation and knowledge of rescue methods.

Supervision . . .

Your supervision must begin as the pond is being built. When choosing a site, try to locate the pond within sight of the farmstead. Then you will be able to see anyone around the pond from your farm buildings.

If the pond must be built some distance from the farmstead, keep a set of binoculars close by, and check the pond area periodically. Be sure to check frequently at times when children might be attracted to the pond.

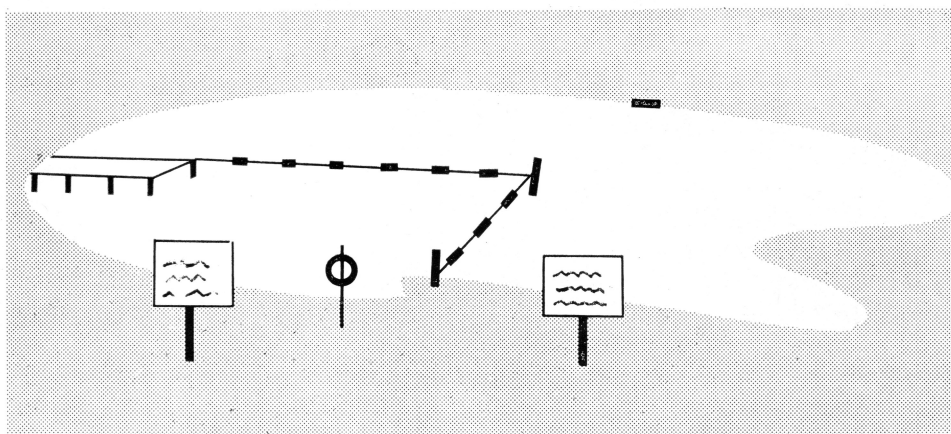
As the pond is being constructed, make sure all brush, stumps, trees, wire and rubbish are cleared from

the swimming and boating area. Then enclose the pond with a fence high enough to prevent children from climbing over and playing in or near the pond without supervision. Finally, post appropriate signs warning of both general and specific dangers around the pond. (Figure 1, next page).

Check with your attorney to determine your liability if an accident or death should occur at the pond. And ask him to elaborate on the legal requirements for safety measures for a farm pond. Remember, posting "No trespassing" signs around the pond does not relieve the owner of legal responsibilities.

Recreation . . .

Recreational activities with a farm pond can greatly enrich the lives of a farm family. But if the



Rope off a definite swimming area in the pond, and post the rules. (Photo and drawings courtesy of Soil Conservation Service).

NORVAL J. WARDLE is associate professor of agricultural engineering and Extension Safety Specialist.

WARNING

THIS POND IS XX FEET DEEP

IN CASE OF EMERGENCY:

1. Life Ring, Pole and Rope are available on posts. Either side of Pond.
2. Nearest Telephone is at John Doe home 1/2 mile south.
Call Fire Dept. Phone xxx
Sheriff Phone xxx
Dr. Jones Phone xxx
3. Life Preservers, Boat and Tools are in S.E. corner of barn at farmstead.



FIGURE 1. WARNING SIGN.

pond is improperly used, it can become a tremendous responsibility, source of irritation, hazard and even a killer.

In general, the recreational activities with your pond must be: (1) planned, (2) governed by definite rules, and (3) supervised by an adult.

For swimming activities, allow swimming only in a safe area roped off for that purpose. Mark the depths of water in each area of the pond. Then post definite rules regarding swimming, especially rules which forbid anyone from swimming alone and which forbid non-swimmers from going into the pond.

Make sure the swimming equipment — docks, diving board, etc. — is safe and sturdy. Do not use any old or broken equipment which may cause an accident. Prohibit all swimming if the pond receives drainage from a barnyard or if cattle drink directly from the pond.

To control boating activities, again post definite rules near the pond. In boating, too, it is important that no one be allowed to go on the water alone.

Be certain that only safe, seaworthy boats are used on your pond. If motors are used, don't "over-power" boats. Know the limitations of the boats and point these out to the persons using the boats. Also, keep a 2 to 5 pound carbon dioxide or dry chemical fire extinguisher in each powered boat.

Paint the weight limit on each boat. Then never overload the boat,

Notes:

1. Use dark lettering on white background.
2. Use large size lettering. Largest letters should be 2" or larger. Smallest letters 1".
3. Preserve face of sign by coating with clear preservative.
4. Post signs where easily seen when approaching pond.
5. Keep vegetation cut short around signs.

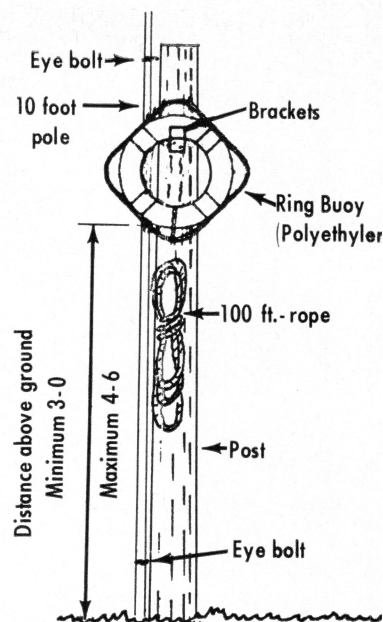


FIGURE 2. RESCUE EQUIPMENT.

and always make sure the load is properly balanced.

On the water, make only wide turns with the boat. Sharp turns are particularly hazardous for unskilled boaters. And finally, keep all boats off the pond whenever there are strong winds and high waves.

Enforce the same general rules for ice skating as for swimming. Post the rules! Never allow anyone to skate alone, and designate a specific area for skating. Also, check the ice daily before allowing anyone to skate, and post a flag announcing your decision on the condition of the ice. A blue flag means the ice is safe for skating. A red one means "Do not skate; the ice is dangerous."

Fishing activity also should be restricted to certain posted areas. Again, post the rules, and do not let anyone fish alone.

Rescue . . .

Lifesaving devices placed conspicuously around swimming and boating areas (Figure 2) along with a knowledge of rescue procedures provide your last safeguard against disaster in case preventive measures fail.

Know how to use lifesaving equipment, and learn rescue breathing procedures. Then teach these breathing procedures to your family, and practice them with the members of the family. And finally, have at least one member of the family take training in water lifesaving methods.

Fire Protection . . .

In case of a fire, the pond can be a source of water and thus provide protection against fire — if proper provisions are taken.

First, build a good road to the edge of the pond. That road should end within 10 to 20 feet from the water.

Second, build a frost proof plug in the pond to prevent ice from sealing off the water supply during winter months. To make this plug, anchor a wooden barrel in the water and extend it 10 to 12 inches above the water surface. Fill the barrel with water to pond level, and add 3 to 4 pounds of salt per gallon.

Cover the barrel to keep out snow. If a fire breaks out, this barrel can be uncovered and removed, or a hole can be knocked in the bottom to get to the pond water.

Is It Worth While?

All these safety precautions may seem to make a farm pond more trouble than it's worth. Only you can decide whether your needs and your desires warrant a pond on your farm. But if you have *any* kind of pond on your farm, it represents a potential hazard.

The safety precautions outlined above can materially reduce the hazard. Following these precautions will add to your peace of mind and greatly increase the pleasure you and your family get from your farm pond.